No. 1 [PRICE

VANITY FAIR:

PEN AND PENCIL SKETCHES OF ENGLISH SOCIETY.

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Author of "The Irish Sketch Book:" "Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo:" of "Jeames's Diary" and the "Snob Papers" in Punch: &c. &c.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED AT THE PUNCH OFFICE, 85, FLEET STREET.

J. MENZIES, EDINBURGH; J. M'LEOD, GLASGOW; J. M'GLASHAN, DUBLIN.

[Bradbury & Evans, Printers, Whitefriars.]

Mr Joseph entangled

Rebecca's Farewell

VANITY FAIR.

A NOVEL WITHOUT A HERO.

CHAPTER I.

CHISWICK MALL.

WHILE the present century was in its teens, and on one sun-shiny morning in June, there drove up to the great iron gate of Miss Pinkerton's academy for young ladies, on Chiswick Mall, a large family coach, with two fat horses in blazing harness, driven by a fat coachman in a three-cornered hat and wig, at the rate of four miles an hour. A black servant, who reposed on the box beside the fat coachman, uncurled his bandy legs as soon as the equipage drew up opposite Miss Pinkerton's shining brass plate, and as he pulled the bell, at least a score of young heads were seen peering out of the narrow windows of the stately old brick house. Nay, the acute observer might have recognised the little red nose of good-natured Miss Jemima Pinkerton herself, rising over some geranium-pots in the window of that lady's own drawing-room.

"It is Mrs. Sedley's coach, sister," said Miss Jemima. "Sambo, the black servant, has just rung the bell; and the coachman has a new red waistcoat."

"Have you completed all the necessary preparations incident to Miss Sedley's departure, Miss Jemima?" asked Miss Pinkerton herself, that majestic lady: the Semiramis of Hammersmith, the friend of Doctor Johnson, the correspondent of Mrs. Chapone herself.

"The girls were up at four this morning, packing her trunks, sister," replied Miss Jemima; "we have made her a bow-pot."

"Say a bouquet, sister Jemima, 'tis more genteel."

'Well, a booky as big almost as a hay-stack; I have put up two bottles of the gillyflower-water for Mrs. Sedley, and the receipt for making it, in Amelia's box."

"And I trust, Miss Jemima, you have made a copy of Miss Sedley's

account. This is it, is it? Very good—ninety-three pounds, four shillings. Be kind enough to address it to John Sedley, Esquire, and to seal this billet which I have written to his lady."

In Miss Jemima's eyes an autograph letter of her sister, Miss Pinkerton, was an object of as deep veneration, as would have been a letter from a sovereign. Only when her pupils quitted the establishment, or when they were about to be married, and once, when poor Miss Birch died of the scarlet fever, was Miss Pinkerton known to write personally to the parents of her pupils; and it was Jemima's opinion that if anything *could* console Mrs. Birch for her daughter's loss, it would be that pious and eloquent composition in which Miss Pinkerton announced the event.

In the present instance Miss Pinkerton's "billet" was to the following effect:—

"*The Mall, Chiswick, June* 15, 18—.

"Madam,—After her six years' residence at the Mall, I have the honour and happiness of presenting Miss Amelia Sedley to her parents,

as a young lady not unworthy to occupy a fitting position in their polished and refined circle. Those virtues which characterise the young English gentlewoman, those accomplishments which become her birth and station, will not be found wanting in the amiable Miss Sedley, whose *industry* and *obedience* have endeared her to her instructors, and whose delightful sweetness of temper has charmed her *aged* and her *youthful* companions.

"In music, in dancing, in orthography, in every variety of embroidery and needle-work, she will be found to have realised her friends' *fondest wishes*. In geography there is still much to be desired; and a careful and undeviating use of the backboard, for four hours daily during the next three years, is recommended as necessary to the acquirement of that dignified *deportment and carriage*, so requisite for every young lady of *fashion*.

"In the principles of religion and morality, Miss Sedley will be found worthy of an establishment which has been honoured by the presence of *The Great Lexicographer*, and the patronage of the admirable Mrs. Chapone. In leaving the Mall, Miss Amelia carries with her the hearts of her companions, and the affectionate regards of her mistress, who has the honour to subscribe herself,

"Madam,
"Your most obliged humble servant,
"BARBARA PINKERTON."

"P.S. Miss Sharp accompanies Miss Sedley. It is particularly requested that Miss Sharp's stay in Russell Square may not exceed ten days. The family of distinction with whom she is engaged, desire to avail themselves of her services as soon as possible."

This letter completed, Miss Pinkerton proceeded to write her own name, and Miss Sedley's, in the fly-leaf of a Johnson's Dictionary—the interesting work which she invariably presented to her scholars, on their departure from the Mall. On the cover was inserted a copy of "Lines addressed to a young lady on quitting Miss Pinkerton's school, at the Mall; by the late revered Doctor Samuel Johnson." In fact, the Lexicographer's name was always on the lips of this majestic woman, and a visit he had paid to her was the cause of her reputation and her fortune.

Being commanded by her elder sister to get "the Dictionary" from the cupboard, Miss Jemima had extracted two copies of the book from the receptacle in question. When Miss Pinkerton had finished the inscription in the first, Jemima, with rather a dubious and timid air, handed her the second.

"For whom is this, Miss Jemima?" said Miss Pinkerton, with awful coldness.

"For Becky Sharp," answered Jemima, trembling very much, and blushing over her withered face and neck, as she turned her back on her sister. "For Becky Sharp: she's going too."

"MISS JEMIMA!" exclaimed Miss Pinkerton, in the largest capitals. "Are you in your senses? Replace the Dixonary in the closet, and never venture to take such a liberty in future."

"Well, sister, it's only two-and-ninepence, and poor Becky will be miserable if she don't get one."

"Send Miss Sedley instantly to me," said Miss Pinkerton. And so venturing not to say another word, poor Jemima trotted off, exceedingly flurried and nervous.

Miss Sedley's papa was a merchant in London, and a man of some wealth; whereas Miss Sharp was an articled pupil, for whom Miss Pinkerton had done, as she thought, quite enough, without conferring upon her at parting, the high honour of the Dixonary.

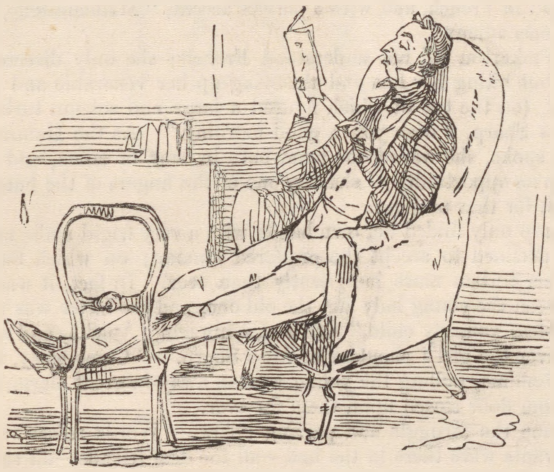
Although Schoolmistresses' letters are to be trusted no more nor less than churchyard epitaphs; yet, as it sometimes happens that a person departs this life, who is really deserving of all the praises the stone-cutter carves over his bones; who *is* a good Christian, a good parent, child, wife or husband; who actually *does* leave a disconsolate family to mourn his loss; so in academies of the male and female sex it occurs every now and then, that the pupil is fully worthy of the praises bestowed by the disinterested instructor. Now, Miss Amelia Sedley was a young lady of this singular species; and deserved not only all that Miss Pinkerton said in her praise, but had many charming qualities which that pompous old Minerva of a woman could not see, from the differences of rank and age between her pupil and herself.

For she could not only sing like a lark, or a Mrs. Billington, and dance like Hillisberg or Parisot; and embroider beautifully; and spell as well as the Dixonary itself; but she had such a kindly, smiling, tender, gentle, generous heart of her own, as won the love of everybody who came near her, from Minerva herself down to the poor girl in the scullery, and the one-eyed tartwoman's daughter, who was permitted to vend her wares once a week to the young ladies in the Mall. She had twelve intimate and bosom friends out of the twenty-four young ladies. Even envious Miss Briggs never spoke ill of her: high and mighty Miss Saltire (Lord Dexter's grand-daughter) allowed that her figure was genteel: and as for Miss Swartz, the rich woolly-haired mulatto from St. Kitt's, on the day Amelia went away, she was in such a passion of tears, that they were obliged to send for Dr. Floss, and half tipsify her with salvolatile. Miss Pinkerton's attachment was, as may be supposed, from the high position and eminent virtues of that lady, calm and dignified; but Miss Jemima had already blubbered several times at the idea of Amelia's departure; and, but for fear of her sister, would have gone off in downright hysterics, like the heiress (who paid double) of St. Kitt's. Such luxury of grief, however, is only allowed to parlour-boarders. Honest Jemima had all the bills, and the washing, and the mending, and the puddings, and the plate and crockery, and the servants to superintend. But why speak about her? It is probable that we shall not hear of her again from this moment to the end of time, and that when the great filligree iron gates are once closed on her, she and her awful sister will never issue therefrom into this little world of history.

But as we are to see a great deal of Amelia, there is no harm in saying at the outset of our acquaintance, that she was one of the best and dearest creatures that ever lived; and a great mercy it is, both in life and in novels, which (and the latter especially) abound in villains of the most sombre sort, that we are to have for a constant companion, so guileless

and good-natured a person. As she is not a heroine, there is no need to describe her person; indeed I am afraid that her nose was rather short than otherwise, and her cheeks a great deal too round and red for a heroine; but her face blushed with rosy health, and her lips with the freshest of smiles, and she had a pair of eyes, which sparkled with the brightest and honestest good-humour, except indeed when they filled with tears, and that was a great deal too often; for the silly thing would cry over a dead canary-bird, or over a mouse, that the cat haply had seized upon, or over the end of a novel, were it ever so stupid; and as for saying an unkind word to her, were any one hard-hearted enough to do so,—why, so much the worse for them. Even Miss Pinkerton, that austere and god-like woman, ceased scolding her after the first time, and though she no more comprehended sensibility than she did Algebra, gave all masters and teachers particular orders to treat Miss Sedley with the utmost gentleness, as harsh treatment was injurious to her.

So that when the day of departure came, between her two customs of laughing and crying, Miss Sedley was greatly puzzled how to act. She was glad to go home, and yet most wofully sad at leaving school. For three days before, little Laura Martin, the orphan, followed her about, like a little dog. She had to make and receive at least fourteen presents,—to make fourteen solemn promises of writing every week: "Send my letters under cover to my grandpapa, the Earl of Dexter," said Miss Saltire (who, by the way was rather shabby): "Never mind the postage, but write every day, you dear darling," said the impetuous and woolly-headed, but generous and affectionate Miss Swartz; and little Laura Martin (who was just in round hand) took her friend's hand and said, looking up in her face wistfully, "Amelia, when I write to you I shall call you Mamma." All



which details, I have no doubt, JONES, who reads this book at his Club,

will pronounce to be excessively foolish, trivial, twaddling, and ultra-sentimental. Yes; I can see Jones at this minute (rather flushed with his joint of mutton and half-pint of wine), taking out his pencil and scoring under the words "foolish, twaddling," &c., and adding to them his own remark of "*quite true.*" Well, he is a lofty man of genius, and admires the great and heroic in life and novels; and so had better take warning and go elsewhere.

Well, then. The flowers, and the presents, and the trunks, and bonnet-boxes of Miss Sedley having been arranged by Mr. Sambo in the carriage, together with a very small and weather-beaten old cow's-skin trunk with Miss Sharp's card neatly nailed upon it, which was delivered by Sambo with a grin, and packed by the coachman with a corresponding sneer—the hour for parting came; and the grief of that moment was considerably lessened by the admirable discourse which Miss Pinkerton addressed to her pupil. Not that the parting speech caused Amelia to philosophise, or that it armed her in any way with a calmness, the result of argument; but it was intolerably dull, pompous, and tedious; and having the fear of her schoolmistress greatly before her eyes, Miss Sedley did not venture, in her presence, to give way to any ebullitions of private grief. A seed-cake and a bottle of wine were produced in the drawing-room, as on the solemn occasions of the visit of parents, and these refreshments being partaken of, Miss Sedley was at liberty to depart.

"You 'll go in and say good by to Miss Pinkerton, Becky?" said Miss Jemima to a young lady of whom nobody took any notice, and who was coming down stairs with her own bandbox.

"I suppose I must," said Miss Sharp calmly, and much to the wonder of Miss Jemima; and the latter having knocked at the door, and receiving permission to come in, Miss Sharp advanced in a very unconcerned manner, and said in French, and with a perfect accent, "Mademoiselle, je viens vous faire mes adieux."

"Miss Pinkerton did not understand French; she only directed those who did: but biting her lips and throwing up her venerable and Roman-nosed head, (on the top of which figured a large and solemn turban,) she said, "Miss Sharp, I wish you a good morning." As the Hammersmith Semiramis spoke, she waved one hand both by way of adieu, and to give Miss Sharp an opportunity of shaking one of the fingers of the hand which was left out for that purpose.

Miss Sharp only folded her own hands with a very frigid smile and bow, and quite declined to accept the proffered honour; on which Semiramis tossed up her turban more indignantly than ever. In fact, it was a little battle between the young lady and the old one, and the latter was worsted. "Heaven bless you, my child," said she, embracing Amelia, and scowling the while over the girl's shoulder at Miss Sharp. "Come away, Becky," said Miss Jemima, pulling the young woman away in great alarm, and the drawing-room door closed upon them for ever.

Then came the struggle and parting below. Words refuse to tell it. All the servants were there in the hall—all the dear friends—all the young ladies—the dancing-master who had just arrived; and there was such a scuffling, and hugging, and kissing, and crying, with the hysterical *yoops*

of Miss Swartz, the parlour-boarder, from her room, as no pen can depict, and as the tender heart would fain pass over. The embracing was over; they parted—that is, Miss Sedley parted from her friends. Miss Sharp had demurely entered the carriage some minutes before. Nobody cried for leaving *her*.

Sambo of the bandy-legs slammed the carriage-door on his young weeping mistress. He sprang up behind the carriage. "Stop!" cried Miss Jemima, rushing to the gate with a parcel.

"It 's some sandwiches, my dear," said she to Amelia. "You may be hungry, you know; and Becky, Becky Sharp, here 's a book for you that my sister—that is, I,—Johnson's Dixonary, you know; you mustn't leave us without that. Good by. Drive on, coachman. God bless you!"

And the kind creature retreated into the garden, overcome with emotions.

But, lo! and just as the coach drove off, Miss Sharp put her pale face out of the window, and actually flung the book back into the garden.

This almost caused Jemima to faint with terror. "Well, I never,"—said she—"what an audacious"—Emotion prevented her from completing either sentence. The carriage rolled away; the great gates were closed; the bell rang for the dancing lesson. The world is before the two young ladies; and so, farewell to Chiswick Mall.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH MISS SHARP AND MISS SEDLEY PREPARE TO OPEN THE CAMPAIGN.

When Miss Sharp had performed the heroical act mentioned in the last chapter, and had seen the Dixonary flying over the pavement of the little garden, fall at length at the feet of the astonished Miss Jemima, the young lady's countenance, which had before worn an almost livid look of hatred, assumed a smile that perhaps was scarcely more agreeable, and she sank back in the carriage in an easy frame of mind, saying,—"So much for the Dixonary; and, thank God, I'm out of Chiswick."

Miss Sedley was almost as flurried at the act of defiance as Miss Jemima had been; for, consider, it was but one minute that she had left school, and the impressions of six years are not got over in that space of time. Nay, with some persons those awes and terrors of youth last for ever and ever. I know, for instance, an old gentleman of sixty-eight, who said to me one morning at breakfast, with a very agitated countenance, "I dreamed last night that I was flogged by Dr. Raine." Fancy had carried him back only fifty years in the course of that evening. Dr. Raine and his rod were just as awful to him in his heart, then, at sixty-eight, as they had been at thirteen. If the Doctor, with a large birch, had appeared bodily to him, even at the age of threescore and eight, and had said in awful voice, "Boy, take down your pant * *?" Well, well, Miss Sedley was exceedingly alarmed at this act of insubordination.

"How could you do so, Rebecca?" at last she said, after a pause.

"Why, do you think Miss Pinkerton will come out and order me back to the black-hole?" said Rebecca, laughing.

"No: but——"

"I hate the whole house," continued Miss Sharp, in a fury. "I hope I may never set eyes on it again. I wish it were in the bottom of the Thames, I do; and if Miss Pinkerton were there, I wouldn't pick her out, that I wouldn't. O how I should like to see her floating in the water yonder, turban and all, with her train streaming after her, and her nose like the beak of a wherry."

"Hush!" cried Miss Sedley.

"Why, will the black footman tell tales?" cried Miss Rebecca, laughing. "He may go back and tell Miss Pinkerton that I hate her with all my soul; and I wish he would; and I wish I had a means of proving it too. For two years I have only had insults and outrage from her. I have been treated worse than any servant in the kitchen. I have never had a friend or a kind word, except from you. I have been made to tend the little girls

in the lower schoolroom, and to talk French to the Misses, until I grew sick of my mother-tongue. But that talking French to Miss Pinkerton was capital fun, wasn't it? She doesn't know a word of French, and was too proud to confess it. I believe it was that which made her part with me; and so thank Heaven for French. *Vive la France! Vive l'Empereur! Vive Bonaparte!*"

"O Rebecca, Rebecca, for shame!" cried Miss Sedley; for this was the greatest blasphemy Rebecca had as yet uttered; and in those days, in England, to say "Long live Bonaparte!" was as much as to say "Long live Lucifer!" "How can you—how dare you have such wicked, revengeful thoughts?"

"Revenge may be wicked, but it 's natural," answered Miss Rebecca. "I 'm no angel." And, to say the truth, she certainly was not.

For it may be remarked in the course of this little conversation (which took place as the coach rolled along lazily by the river side) that though Miss Rebecca Sharp has twice had occasion to thank Heaven, it has been, in the first place, for ridding her of some person whom she hated, and secondly, for enabling her to bring her enemies to some sort of perplexity or confusion; neither of which are very amiable motives for religious gratitude, or such as would be put forward by persons of a kind and placable disposition. Miss Rebecca was not, then, in the least kind or placable. All the world used her ill, said this young misanthropist (or misogynist, for of the world of men she can be pronounced as yet to have had but little experience), and we may be pretty certain that the persons of either sex whom all the world treats ill, deserve entirely the treatment they get. The world is a looking-glass, and gives back to every man the reflection of his own face. Frown at it, and it will in turn look sourly upon you: laugh at it and with it, and it is a jolly kind companion; and so let all young persons take their choice. This is certain, that if the world neglected Miss Sharp, she never was known to have done a good action in behalf of anybody; nor can it be expected that twenty-four young ladies should all be as amiable as the heroine of this work, Miss Sedley (whom we have selected for the very reason that she was the best-natured of all, otherwise what on earth was to have prevented us from putting up Miss Swartz, or Miss Crump, or Miss Hopkins, as heroine in her place?) it could not be expected that every one should be of the humble and gentle temper of Miss Amelia Sedley; should take every opportunity to vanquish Rebecca's hard-heartedness and ill-humour; and, by a thousand kind words and offices, overcome, for once at least, her hostility to her kind.

Miss Sharp's father was an artist, and in that quality had given lessons of drawing at Miss Pinkerton's school. He was a clever man; a pleasant companion; a careless student; had a great propensity for running into debt, and a partiality for the tavern. When he was drunk, he used to beat his wife and daughter; and the next morning, with a headache, he used to rail at the world for its neglect of his genius, and abuse, with a good deal of cleverness, and sometimes with perfect reason, the fools, his brother painters. As it was with the utmost difficulty that he could keep himself, and as he owed money for a mile round Soho, where he lived, he

thought to better his circumstances by marrying a young woman of the French nation, who was by profession an opera-girl. The humble calling of her female parent, Miss Sharp never alluded to, but used to state subsequently that the Entrechats were a noble family of Gascony, and took great pride in her descent from them. And curious it is, that as she advanced in life this young lady's ancestors increased in rank and splendour.

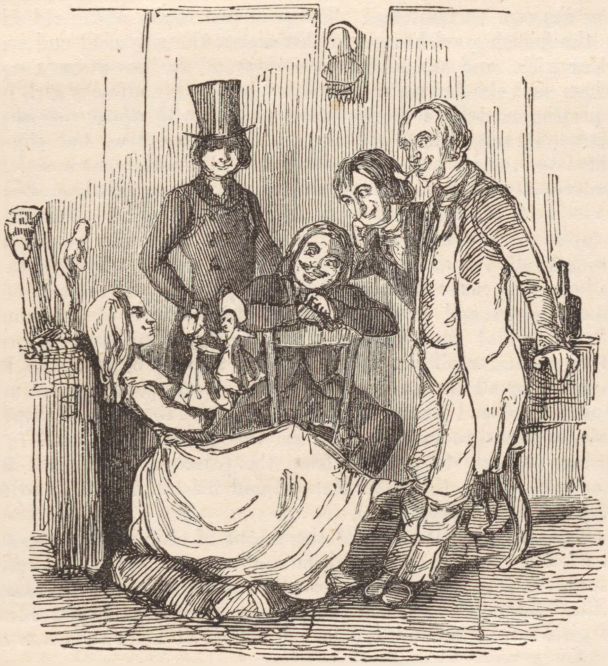
Rebecca's mother had had some education somewhere, and her daughter spoke French with purity and a Parisian accent. It was in those days rather a rare accomplishment, and led to her engagement with the orthodox Miss Pinkerton. For her mother being dead, and her father finding himself not likely to recover, after his third attack of *delirium tremens*, wrote a manly and pathetic letter to Miss Pinkerton, recommending the orphan child to her protection, and so descended to the grave, after two bailiffs had quarrelled over his corpse. Rebecca was seventeen when she came to Chiswick, and was bound over as an articled pupil, her duties being to talk French, as we have seen, and her privileges to live cost free; and, with a few guineas a year, to gather scraps of knowledge from the professors who attended the school.

She was small and slight in person; pale, sandy-haired, and with eyes habitually cast down: when they looked up they were very large, odd, and attractive; so attractive, that the Reverend Mr. Crisp, fresh from Oxford, and curate to the Vicar of Chiswick, the Reverend Mr. Flowerdew, fell in love with Miss Sharp; being shot dead by a glance of her eyes which was fired all the way across Chiswick Church from the school-pew to the reading-desk. This infatuated young man used sometimes to take tea with Miss Pinkerton, to whom he had been presented by his mamma, and actually proposed something like marriage in an intercepted note, which the one-eyed applewoman was charged to deliver. Mrs. Crisp was summoned from Buxton, and abruptly carried off her darling boy; but the idea, even, of such an eagle in the Chiswick dovecot caused a great flutter in the breast of Miss Pinkerton, who would have sent away Miss Sharp, but that she was bound to her under a forfeit, and who never could thoroughly believe the young lady's protestations that she had never exchanged a single word with Mr. Crisp, except under her own eyes on the two occasions when she had met him at tea.

By the side of many tall and bouncing young ladies in the establishment, Rebecca Sharp looked like a child. But she had the dismal precocity of poverty. Many a dun had she talked to, and turned away from her father's door; many a tradesman had she coaxed and wheedled into good-humour, and into the granting of one meal more. She sate commonly with her father, who was very proud of her wit, and heard the talk of many of his wild companions—often but ill suited for a girl to hear. But she never had been a girl, she said; she had been a woman since she was eight years old. O why did Miss Pinkerton let such a dangerous bird into her cage?

The fact is, the old lady thought Rebecca to be the meekest creature in the world, so admirably, on the occasions when her father brought her to Chiswick, used Rebecca to perform the part of the *ingénue*. She thought her a modest and innocent little child; and only a year before the arrange-

ment by which Rebecca had been admitted into her house, and when Rebecca was sixteen years old, Miss Pinkerton majestically, and with a little speech, made her a present of a doll—which was, by the way, the confiscated property of Miss Swindle, discovered surreptitiously nursing it in school-hours. How the father and daughter laughed as they trudged home together after the evening party, (it was on the occasion of the speeches, when all the professors were invited,) and how Miss Pinkerton would have raged had she seen the caricature of herself which the little mimic, Rebecca, managed to make out of her doll! She used to go through dialogues with it; it formed the delight of Newman Street, Gerard Street, and the artists' quarter: and the young painters, when they came to take their gin-and-water with their lazy, dissolute, clever, jovial senior, used regularly



to ask Rebecca if Miss Pinkerton was at home: she was well known to them, poor soul! as Mr. Lawrence or President West. Once she had the honour to pass a few days at Chiswick; after which she brought back Jemima, and erected another doll as Miss Jemmy; for though that honest creature had made and given her jelly and cake enough for three children, and a seven-shilling piece at parting, the girl's sense of ridicule was far

stronger than her gratitude, and she sacrificed Miss Jemmy quite as pitilessly as her sister.

The catastrophe came, and she was brought to the Mall as to her home. The rigid formality of the place suffocated her: the prayers and the meals, the lessons and the walks, which were arranged with a conventual regularity, oppressed her almost beyond endurance: and she looked back to the freedom and the beggary of the old studio in Soho with so much regret, that everybody, herself included, fancied she was consumed with grief for her father. She had a little room in the garret, where the maids heard her walking and sobbing at night; but it was with rage, and not with grief. She had not been much of a dissembler, until now her loneliness taught her to feign. She had never mingled in the society of women: her father, reprobate as he was, was a man of talent; his conversation was a thousand times more agreeable to her than the talk of such of her own sex as she now encountered. The pompous vanity of the old schoolmistress, the foolish good-humour of her sister, the silly chat and scandal of the elder girls, and the frigid correctness of the governesses equally annoyed her; and she had no soft maternal heart, this unlucky girl, otherwise the prattle and talk of the younger children, with whose care she was chiefly intrusted, might have soothed and interested her; but she lived among them two years, and not one was sorry that she went away. The gentle tender-hearted Amelia Sedley was the only person to whom she could attach herself in the least; and who could help attaching herself to Amelia?

The happiness—the superior advantages of the young women round about her, gave Rebecca inexpressible pangs of envy. "What airs that girl gives herself, because she is an Earl's granddaughter," she said of one. "How they cringe and bow to that Creole, because of her hundred thousand pounds! I am a thousand times cleverer and more charming than that creature, for all her wealth. I am as well bred as the Earl's granddaughter, for all her fine pedigree; and yet every one passes me by here. And yet, when I was at my father's, did not the men give up their gayest balls and parties in order to pass the evening with me?" She determined at any rate to get free from the prison in which she found herself, and now began to act for herself, and for the first time to make connected plans for the future.

She took advantage, therefore, of the means of study the place offered her; and as she was already a musician and a good linguist, she speedily went through the little course of study which was considered necessary for ladies in those days. Her music she practised incessantly, and one day, when the girls were out, and she had remained at home, she was overheard to play a piece so well, that Minerva thought wisely, she could spare herself the expense of a master for the juniors, and intimated to Miss Sharp that she was to instruct them in music for the future.

The girl refused; and for the first time, and to the astonishment of the majestic mistress of the school. "I am here to speak French with the children," Rebecca said abruptly, "not to teach them music, and save money for you. Give me money, and I will teach them."

Minerva was obliged to yield, and, of course, disliked her from that day. "For five-and-thirty years," she said, and with great justice, "I never

have seen the individual who has dared in my own house to question my authority. I have nourished a viper in my bosom."

"A viper—a fiddlestick," said Miss Sharp to the old lady, almost fainting with astonishment. "You took me because I was useful. There is no question of gratitude between us. I hate this place, and want to leave it. I will do nothing here, but what I am obliged to do."

It was in vain that the old lady asked her if she was aware she was speaking to Miss Pinkerton? Rebecca laughed in her face, with a horrid sarcastic demoniacal laughter, that almost sent the schoolmistress into fits. "Give me a sum of money," said the girl, "and get rid of me—or, if you like better, get me a good place as governess in a nobleman's family—you can do so if you please." And in their further disputes she always returned to this point, "Get me a situation—we hate each other, and I am ready to go."

Worthy Miss Pinkerton, although she had a Roman nose and a turban, and was as tall as a grenadier, and had been up to this time an irresistible princess, had no will or strength like that of her little apprentice, and in vain did battle against her, and tried to overawe her. Attempting once to scold her in public, Rebecca hit upon the before-mentioned plan of answering her in French, which quite routed the old woman. In order to maintain authority in her school, it became necessary to remove this rebel, this monster, this serpent, this firebrand; and hearing about this time that Sir Pitt Crawley's family was in want of a governess, she actually recommended Miss Sharp for the situation, firebrand and serpent that she was. "I cannot, certainly," she said, "find fault with Miss Sharp's conduct, except to myself; and must allow that her talents and accomplishments are of a high order. As far as the head goes, at least, she does credit to the educational system pursued at my establishment."

And so the schoolmistress reconciled the recommendation to her conscience, and the indentures were cancelled, and the apprentice was free. The battle here described in a few lines, of course, lasted for some months. And as Miss Sedley, being now seventeen years of age, was about to leave school, and had a friendship for Miss Sharp, ("'tis the only point in Amelia's behaviour," said Minerva, "which has not been satisfactory to her mistress,") Miss Sharp was invited by her friend to pass a week with her at home, before she entered upon her duties as governess in a private family.

Thus the world began for these two young ladies. For Amelia it was quite a new, fresh, brilliant world, with all the bloom upon it. It was not quite a new one for Rebecca—(indeed, if the truth must be told with respect to the Crisp affair, the tart-woman hinted to somebody who took an affidavit of the fact to somebody else, that there was a great deal more than was made public regarding Mr. Crisp and Miss Sharp, and that his letter was *in answer* to another letter). But who can tell you the real truth of the matter? At all events, if Rebecca was not beginning the world, she was beginning it over again.

By the time the young ladies reached Kensington turnpike, Amelia had not forgotten her companions, but had dried her tears, and had blushed very much and been delighted at a young officer of the Horse Guards, who

spied her as he was riding by, and said, "A dem fine gal, egad!" and before the carriage arrived in Russell Square, a great deal of conversation had taken place about the drawing-room, and whether or not young ladies wore powder as well as hoops when presented, and whether she was to have that honour: to the Lord Mayor's ball she knew she was to go. And when at length home was reached, Miss Amelia Sedley skipped out on Sambo's arm, as happy and as handsome a girl as any in the whole big city of London. Both he and coachman agreed on this point, and so did her father and mother, and so did every one of the servants in the house, as they stood bobbing, and curtseying, and smiling, in the hall, to welcome their young mistress.

You may be sure that she showed Rebecca over every room of the house, and everything in every one of her drawers, and her books, and her piano, and her dresses, and all her necklaces, brooches, laces, and gimcracks. She insisted upon Rebecca accepting the white cornelian and the turquoise rings, and a sweet sprigged muslin, which was too small for her now, though it would fit her friend to a nicety; and she determined in her heart to ask her mother's permission to present her white Cashmere shawl to her friend. Could she not spare it? and had not her brother Joseph just brought her two from India?

When Rebecca saw the two magnificent Cashmere shawls which Joseph Sedley had brought home to his sister, she said, with perfect truth, "that it must be delightful to have a brother," and easily got the pity of the tender-hearted Amelia, for being alone in the world, an orphan without friends or kindred.

"Not alone," said Amelia, "you know, Rebecca, I shall always be your friend, and love you as a sister—indeed I will."

"Ah, but to have parents, as you have—kind, rich, affectionate parents, who give you everything you ask for; and their love, which is more precious than all! My poor papa could give me nothing, and I had but two frocks in all the world! And then, to have a brother, a dear brother! Oh how you must love him!"

Amelia laughed.

"What! *don't* you love him? you, who say you love everybody?"

"Yes, of course, I do—only—"

"Only what?"

"Only Joseph doesn't seem to care much whether I love him or not. He gave me two fingers to shake when he arrived after ten years' absence! He is very kind and good, but he scarcely ever speaks to me; I think he loves his pipe a great deal better than his" * * * but here Amelia checked herself, for why should she speak ill of her brother? "He was very kind to me as a child," she added; "I was but five years old when he went away."

"Isn't he very rich?" said Rebecca. "They say all Indian nabobs are enormously rich."

"I believe he has a very large income."

"And is your sister-in-law a nice pretty woman?"

"La! Joseph is not married," said Amelia, laughing again.

Perhaps she had mentioned the fact already to Rebecca, but that young

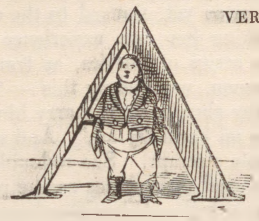
lady did not appear to have remembered it; indeed, vowed and protested that she expected to see a number of Amelia's nephews and nieces. She was quite disappointed that Mr. Sedley was not married; she was sure Amelia had said he was, and she doted so on little children.

"I think you must have had enough of them at Chiswick," said Amelia, rather wondering at the sudden tenderness on her friend's part; and indeed in later days Miss Sharp would never have committed herself so far as to advance opinions, the untruth of which would have been so easily detected. But we must remember that she is but nineteen as yet, unused to the art of deceiving, poor innocent creature! and making her own experience in her own person. The meaning of the above series of queries, as translated in the heart of this ingenious young woman, was simply this:—'If Mr. Joseph Sedley is rich and unmarried, why should I not marry him? I have only a fortnight, to be sure, but there is no harm trying." And she determined within herself to make this laudable attempt. She redoubled her caresses to Amelia; she kissed the white cornelian necklace as she put it on; and vowed she would never, never part with it. When the dinner-bell rang she went down stairs with her arm round her friend's waist, as is the habit of young ladies. She was so agitated at the drawing-room door, that she could hardly find courage to enter. "Feel my heart, how it beats, dear!" said she to her friend.

"No, it doesn't," said Amelia. "Come in, don't be frightened. Papa wont do you any harm."

CHAPTER III.

REBECCA IS IN PRESENCE OF THE ENEMY.



A VERY stout, puffy man, in buckskins and hessian boots, with several immense neckcloths, that rose almost to his nose, with a red striped waistcoat and an apple green coat with steel buttons almost as large as crown pieces, (it was the morning costume of a dandy or blood of those days) was reading the paper by the fire when the two girls entered, and bounced off his arm-chair, and blushed excessively, and hid his entire face almost in his neckcloths at this apparition.

"It's only your sister, Joseph," said Amelia, laughing and shaking the two fingers which he held out. "I've come home *for good* you know; and this is my friend, Miss Sharp, whom you have heard me mention."

"No, never, upon my word," said the head under the neckcloth, shaking very much,—"that is, yes,—what abominably cold weather, Miss;"—and herewith he fell to poking the fire with all his might, although it was in the middle of June.

"He's very handsome," whispered Rebecca to Amelia, rather loud.

"Do you think so?" said the latter, "I'll tell him."

"Darling! not for worlds," said Miss Sharp, starting back as timid as a fawn. She had previously made a respectful virgin-like curtsey to the gentleman, and her modest eyes gazed so perseveringly on the carpet that it was a wonder how she should have found an opportunity to see him.

"Thank you for the beautiful shawls, brother," said Amelia to the fire-poker. "Are they not beautiful, Rebecca?"

"O heavenly!" said Miss Sharp, and her eyes went from the carpet straight to the chandelier.

Joseph still continued a huge clattering at the poker and tongs, puffing and blowing the while, and turning as red as his yellow face would allow him. "I can't make you such handsome presents, Joseph," continued his sister, "but while I was at school, I have embroidered for you a very beautiful pair of braces."

"Good Gad! Amelia," cried the brother, in serious alarm, "what do you mean?" and plunging with all his might at the bell-rope, that article of furniture came away in his hand, and increased the honest fellow's confusion. "For heaven's sake see if my buggy 's at the door. I *can't* wait. I must go. D— that groom of mine. I must go."

At this minute the father of the family walked in, rattling his seals like a true British merchant. "What's the matter, Emmy?" says he.

"Joseph wants me to see if his—his *buggy* is at the door. What is a buggy, papa?"

"It is a one-horse palanquin," said the old gentleman, who was a wag in his way.

Joseph at this burst out into a wild fit of laughter; in which, encountering the eye of Miss Sharp, he stopped all of a sudden, as if he had been shot.

"This young lady is your friend? Miss Sharp, I am very happy to see you. Have you and Emmy been quarrelling already with Joseph, that he wants to be off?"

"I promised Bonamy, of our service, sir," said Joseph, "to dine with him."

"O fie! didn't you tell your mother you would dine here?"

"But in this dress it 's impossible."

"Look at him, isn't he handsome enough to dine anywhere, Miss Sharp?"

On which, of course, Miss Sharp looked at her friend, and they both set off in a fit of laughter, highly agreeable to the old gentleman.

"Did you ever see a pair of buckskins like those at Miss Pinkerton's?" continued he, following up his advantage.

"Gracious heavens! Father," cried Joseph.

"There now, I have hurt his feelings. Mrs. Sedley, my dear, I have hurt your son's feelings. I have alluded to his buckskins. Ask Miss Sharp if I haven't? Come, Joseph, be friends with Miss Sharp, and let us all go to dinner."

"There's a pillau, Joseph, just as you like it, and Papa has brought home the best turbot in Billingsgate."

"Come, come, sir, walk down stairs with Miss Sharp, and I will follow with these two young women," said the father, and he took an arm of wife and daughter and walked merrily off.

If Miss Rebecca Sharp had determined in her heart upon making the conquest of this big beau, I don't think, ladies, we have any right to blame her; for though the task of husband-hunting is generally, and with becoming modesty, entrusted by young persons to their mammas, recollect that Miss Sharp had no kind parent to arrange these delicate matters for her, and that if she did not get a husband for herself, there was no one else in the wide world who would take the trouble off her hands. What causes young people to "come *out*," but the noble ambition of matrimony? What sends them trooping to watering-places? What keeps them dancing till five o'clock in the morning through a whole mortal season? What causes them to labour at piano-forte sonatas, and to learn four songs from a fashionable master at a guinea a lesson, and to play the harp if they have handsome arms and neat elbows, and to wear Lincoln Green toxopholite hats and feathers, but that they may bring down some "desirable" young man with those killing bows and arrows of theirs? What causes respectable parents to take up their carpets, set their houses topsy-turvy, and spend a fifth of their year's income in ball suppers and iced champagne? Is it sheer love of their species, and an unadulterated wish to see young people happy and dancing? Psha! they want to marry their daughters; and, as honest Mrs. Sedley has, in the depths of her kind heart, already arranged a score of little schemes for the settlement of her Amelia, so also had our beloved but unprotected Rebecca, determined to

do her very best to secure the husband, who was even more necessary for her than for her friend. She had a vivid imagination; she had, besides, read the "Arabian Nights" and "Guthrie's Geography," and it is a fact, that while she was dressing for dinner, and after she had asked Amelia whether her brother was very rich, she had built for herself a most magnificent castle in the air, of which she was mistress, with a husband somewhere in the background (she had not seen him as yet, and his figure would not therefore be very distinct); she had arrayed herself in an infinity of shawls, turbans, and diamond necklaces, and had mounted upon an elephant to the sound of the march in Bluebeard, in order to pay a visit of ceremony to the Grand Mogul. Charming Alnaschar visions! it is the happy privilege of youth to construct you, and many a fanciful young creature besides Rebecca Sharp, has indulged in these delightful day-dreams ere now!

Joseph Sedley was twelve years older than his sister Amelia. He was in the East India Company's Civil Service, and his name appeared, at the period of which we write, in the Bengal division of the East India Register, as collector of Boggley Wollah, an honourable and lucrative post, as everybody knows: in order to know to what higher posts Joseph rose in the service, the reader is referred to the same periodical.

Boggley Wollah is situated in a fine, lonely, marshy, jungly district, famous for snipe-shooting, and where not unfrequently you may flush a tiger. Ramgunge, where there is a magistrate, is only forty miles off, and there is a cavalry station about thirty miles farther; so Joseph wrote home to his parents, when he took possession of his collectorship. He had lived for about eight years of his life, quite alone, at this charming place, scarcely seeing a Christian face, except twice a year, when the detachment arrived to carry off the revenues which he had collected, to Calcutta.

Luckily, at this time he caught a liver complaint, for the cure of which he returned to Europe, and which was the source of great comfort and amusement to him in his native country. He did not live with his family while in London, but had lodgings of his own, like a gay young bachelor. Before he went to India he was too young to partake of the delightful pleasures of a man about town, and plunged into them on his return, with considerable assiduity. He drove his horses in the Park; he dined at the fashionable taverns, (for the Oriental Club was not as yet invented); he frequented the theatres, as the mode was in those days, or made his appearance at the opera, laboriously attired in tights and a cocked hat.

On returning to India, and ever after, he used to talk of the pleasure of this period of his existence with great enthusiasm, and give you to understand that he and Brummel were the leading bucks of the day. But he was as lonely here as in his jungle at Boggley Wollah. He scarcely knew a single soul in the metropolis: and were it not for his doctor, and the society of his blue-pill, and his liver complaint, he must have died of loneliness. He was lazy, peevish, and a *bon-vivant;* the appearance of a lady frightened him beyond measure; hence it was but seldom that he joined the paternal circle in Russell Square, where there was plenty of gaiety, and

where the jokes of his good-natured old father frightened his *amour-propre*. His bulk caused Joseph much anxious thought and alarm; now and then he would make a desperate attempt to get rid of his superabundant fat; but his indolence and love of good living speedily got the better of these endeavours at reform, and he found himself again at his three meals a day. He never was well dressed; but he took the hugest pains to adorn his big person, and passed many hours daily in that occupation. His valet made a fortune out of his wardrobe: his toilet-table was covered with as many pomatums and essences as ever were employed by an old beauty: he had tried, in order to give himself a waist, every girth, stay, and waistband then invented. Like most fat men, he *would* have his clothes made too tight, and took care they should be of the most brilliant colours and youthful cut. When dressed at length, in the afternoon, he would issue forth to take a drive with nobody in the Park; and then would come back in order to dress again and go and dine with nobody at the Piazza Coffee-House. He was as vain as a girl; and perhaps his extreme shyness was one of the results of his extreme vanity. If Miss Rebecca can get the better of *him*, and at her first entrance into life, she is a young person of no ordinary cleverness.

The first move showed considerable skill. When she called Sedley a very handsome man, she knew that Amelia would tell her mother, who would probably tell Joseph, or who, at any rate, would be pleased by the compliment paid to her son. All mothers are. If you had told Stycorax that her son Caliban was as handsome as Apollo, she would have been pleased, witch as she was. Perhaps, too, Joseph Sedley would overhear the compliment—Rebecca spoke loud enough—and he *did* hear, and (thinking in his heart that he was a very fine man,) the praise thrilled through every fibre of his big body, and made it tingle with pleasure. Then, however, came a recoil. "Is the girl making fun of me?" he thought, and straightway he bounced towards the bell, and was for retreating, as we have seen, when his father's jokes and his mother's entreaties caused him to pause and stay where he was. He conducted the young lady down to dinner in a dubious and agitated frame of mind. "Does she really think I am handsome?" thought he, "or is she only making game of me?" We have talked of Joseph Sedley being as vain as a girl. Heaven help us! the girls have only to turn the tables, and say of one of their own sex, "She is as vain as a man," and they will have perfect reason. The bearded creatures are quite as eager for praise, quite as finikin over their toilettes, quite as proud of their personal advantages, quite as conscious of their powers of fascination, as any coquette in the world.

Down stairs, then, they went, Joseph very red and blushing, Rebecca very modest, and holding her green eyes downwards. She was dressed in white, with bare shoulders as white as snow—the picture of youth, unprotected innocence, and humble virgin simplicity. "I must be very quiet," thought Rebecca, "and very much interested about India."

Now we have heard how Mrs. Sedley had prepared a fine curry for her son, just as he liked it, and in the course of dinner a portion of this dish was offered to Rebecca. "What is it?" said she, turning an appealing look to Mr. Joseph.

"Capital;" said he. His mouth was full of it: his face quite red with the delightful exercise of gobbling. "Mother, it's as good as my own curries in India."

"Oh, I must try some, if it is an Indian dish," said Miss Rebecca. "I am sure everything must be good that comes from there."

"Give Miss Sharp some curry, my dear," said Mr. Sedley, laughing.

Rebecca had never tasted the dish before.

"Do you find it as good as everything else from India?" said Mr. Sedley.

"Oh, excellent!" said Rebecca, who was suffering tortures with the cayenne pepper.

"Try a chili with it, Miss Sharp," said Joseph, really interested.

"A chili," said Rebecca, gasping. "Oh yes!" She thought a chili was something cool, as its name imported, and was served with some. "How fresh and green they look," she said, and put one into her mouth. It was hotter than the curry; flesh and blood could bear it no longer. She laid down her fork. "Water, for Heaven's sake, water!" she cried. Mr. Sedley burst out laughing (he was a coarse man, from the Stock Exchange, where they love all sorts of practical jokes). "They are real Indian, I assure you," said he. "Sambo, give Miss Sharp some water."

The paternal laugh was echoed by Joseph, who thought the joke capital. The ladies only smiled a little. They thought poor Rebecca suffered too much. She would have liked to choke old Sedley, but she swallowed her mortification as well as she had the abominable curry before it, and as soon as she could speak, said, with a comical, good-humoured air—

"I ought to have remembered the pepper which the Princess of Persia puts in the cream-tarts in the Arabian Nights. Do you put cayenne into your cream-tarts in India, sir?"

Old Sedley began to laugh, and thought Rebecca was a good-humoured girl. Joseph simply said—"Cream-tarts, Miss? Our cream is very bad in Bengal. We generally use goats' milk; and, 'gad, do you know, I've got to prefer it?"

"You won't like *everything* from India now, Miss Sharp," said the old gentleman; but when the ladies had retired after dinner, the wily old fellow said to his son, "Have a care, Joe; that girl is setting her cap at you."

"Pooh! nonsense!" said Joe, highly flattered. "I recollect, sir, there was a girl at Dumdum, a daughter of Cutler of the Artillery, and afterwards married to Lance, the surgeon, who made a dead set at me in the year '4—at me and Mulligatawney, whom I mentioned to you before dinner—a devilish good fellow Mulligatawney—he's a magistrate at Budgebudge, and sure to be in council in five years. Well, sir, the Artillery gave a ball, and Quintin, of the King's 14th, said to me, 'Sedley,' said he, 'I bet you thirteen to ten that Sophy Cutler hooks either you or Mulligatawney before the rains.' 'Done,' says I; and egad, sir—this claret's very good. Adamson's or Carbonell's?" * * *

A slight snore was the only reply: the honest stock-broker was asleep, and so the rest of Joseph's story was lost for that day. But he is always exceedingly communicative in a man's party, and has told this delightful

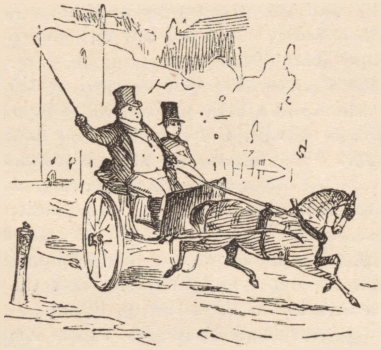
tale many scores of times to his apothecary, Dr. Gollop, when he came to inquire about the liver and the blue-pill.

Being an invalid, Joseph Sedley contented himself with a bottle of claret besides his Madeira at dinner, and he managed a couple of plates full of strawberries and cream, and twenty-four little rout cakes, that were lying neglected in a plate near him, and certainly (for novelists have the privilege of knowing everything), he thought a great deal about the girl up stairs. "A nice, gay, merry young creature," thought he to himself. "How she looked at me when I picked up her handkerchief at dinner! She dropped it twice. Who 's that singing in the drawing-room? 'Gad! shall I go up and see?"

But his modesty came rushing upon him with uncontrolable force. His father was asleep: his hat was in the hall: there was a hackney-coach stand hard by in Southampton Row. "I 'll go and see the *Forty Thieves*," said he, "and Miss Decamp's dance;" and he slipped away gently on the pointed toes of his boots, and disappeared, without waking his worthy parent.

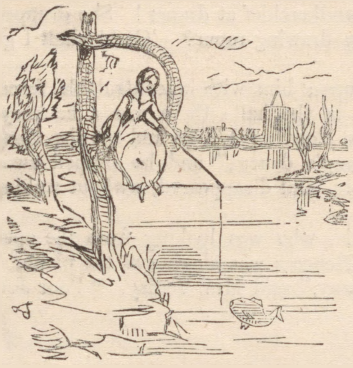
"There goes Joseph," said Amelia, who was looking from the open windows of the drawing-room, while Rebecca was singing at the piano.

"Miss Sharp has frightened him away," said Mrs. Sedley. "Poor Joe, why *will* he be so shy?"



CHAPTER IV.

THE GREEN SILK PURSE.



oor Joe's panic lasted for two or three days; during which he did not visit the house, nor during that period did Miss Rebecca ever mention his name. She was all respectful gratitude to Mrs. Sedley; delighted beyond measure at the Bazaars; and in a whirl of wonder at the theatre, whither the good-natured lady took her. One day, Amelia had a head-ache, and could not go upon some party of pleasure to which the two young people were invited: nothing could induce her friend to go without her. "What! you who have shown the poor orphan what happiness and love are for the first time in her life—quit *you?* never!" and the green eyes looked up to Heaven and filled with tears; and Mrs. Sedley could not but own that her daughter's friend had a charming kind heart of her own.

As for Mr. Sedley's jokes, Rebecca laughed at them with a cordiality and perseverance which not a little pleased and softened that good-natured gentleman. Nor was it with the chiefs of the family alone that Miss Sharp found favour. She interested Mrs. Blenkinsop by evincing the deepest sympathy in the raspberry-jam preserving, which operation was then going on in the Housekeeper's room; she persisted in calling Sambo "Sir," and "Mr. Sambo," to the delight of that attendant; and she apologised to the lady's maid for giving her trouble in venturing to ring the bell, with such sweetness and humility, that the Servants' Hall was almost as charmed with her as the Drawing Room.

Once, in looking over some drawings which Amelia had sent from school, Rebecca suddenly came upon one which caused her to burst into tears and leave the room. It was on the day when Joe Sedley made his second appearance.

Amelia hastened after her friend to know the cause of this display of feeling, and the good-natured girl came back without her companion, rather affected too. "You know, her father was our drawing-master, Mamma, at Chiswick, and used to do all the best parts of our drawings."

"My love! I'm sure I always heard Miss Pinkerton say that he did not touch them—he only *mounted* them."

"It was called mounting, Mamma. Rebecca remembers the drawing,

and her father working at it, and the thought of it came upon her rather suddenly—and so, you know, she——"

"The poor child is all heart," said Mrs. Sedley.

"I wish she could stay with us another week," said Amelia.

"She 's devilish like Miss Cutler that I used to meet at Dumdum, only fairer. She 's married now to Lance, the Artillery surgeon. Do you know, Ma'am, that once Quintin, of the 14th, bet me——"

"O Joseph, we know that story;" said Amelia, laughing. "Never mind about telling that; but persuade Mamma to write to Sir Something Crawley."

"Had he a son in the King's Light Dragoons in India?"

"Well, will you write to him for leave of absence for poor dear Rebecca: —here she comes, her eyes red with weeping."

"I 'm better, now," said the girl, with the sweetest smile possible, taking good-natured Mrs. Sedley's extended hand and kissing it respectfully. "How kind you all are to me! All," she added, with a laugh, "except you, Mr. Joseph."

"Me!" said Joseph, meditating an instant departure. "Gracious Heavens! Good Gad! Miss Sharp!"

"Yes; how could you be so cruel as to make me eat that horrid pepper-dish at dinner, the first day I ever saw you? You are not so good to me as dear Amelia."

"He doesn't know you so well," cried Amelia.

"I defy anybody not to be good to you, my dear," said her mother.

"The curry was capital; indeed it was," said Joe, quite gravely. "Perhaps there was *not* enough citron juice in it;—no, there was *not*."

"And the chilis?"

"By Jove, how they made you cry out!" said Joe, caught by the ridicule of the circumstance, and exploding in a fit of laughter which ended quite suddenly, as usual.

"I shall take care how I let *you* choose for me another time," said Rebecca, as they went down again to dinner. "I didn't think men were fond of putting poor harmless girls to pain."

"By Gad, Miss Rebecca, I wouldn't hurt you for the world."

"No," said she, "I *know* you wouldn't;" and then she gave him ever so gentle a pressure with her little hand, and drew it back quite frightened, and looked first for one instant in his face, and then down at the carpet-rods; and I am not prepared to say that Joe's heart did not thump at this little involuntary, timid, gentle motion of regard on the part of the simple girl.

It was an advance, and as such, perhaps, some ladies of indisputable correctness and gentility will condemn the action as immodest; but, you see, poor dear Rebecca had all this work to do for herself. If a person is too poor to keep a servant, though ever so elegant, he must sweep his own rooms: if a dear girl has no dear Mamma to settle matters with the young man, she must do it for herself. And oh, what a mercy it is that these women do not exercise their powers oftener! We can't resist them, if they do. Let them show ever so little inclination, and men go down on their knees at once: old or ugly, it is all the same. And this I set down

as a positive truth. A woman with fair opportunities, and without an absolute hump, may marry WHOM SHE LIKES. Only let us be thankful that the darlings are like the beasts of the field, and don't know their own power. They would overcome us entirely if they did.

"Egad!" thought Joseph, entering the dining-room, "I exactly begin to feel as I did at Dumdum with Miss Cutler." Many sweet little appeals, half tender, half jocular, did Miss Sharp make to him about the dishes at dinner; for by this time she was on a footing of considerable familiarity with the family, and as for the girls, they loved each other like sisters. Young unmarried girls always do, if they are in a house together for ten days.

As if bent upon advancing Rebecca's plans in every way—what must Amelia do, but remind her brother of a promise made last Easter holidays —"When I was a girl at school," said she, laughing—a promise that he, Joseph, would take her to Vauxhall. "Now," she said, "that Rebecca is with us, will be the very time."

"O, delightful!" said Rebecca, going to clap her hands; but she recollected herself, and paused, like a modest creature, as she was.

"To-night is not the night," said Joe.

"Well, to-morrow."

"To-morrow your Papa and I dine out," said Mrs. Sedley.

"You don't suppose that *I*'m going, Mrs. Sed.?" said her husband, "and that a woman of your years and size is to catch cold, in such an abominable damp place?"

"The children must have some one with them," cried Mrs. Sedley.

"Let Joe go," said his father, laughing. "He's *big* enough." At which speech even Mr. Sambo at the sideboard burst out laughing, and poor fat Joe felt inclined to become a parricide almost.

"Undo his stays!" continued the pitiless old gentleman. "Fling some water in his face, Miss Sharp, or carry him up stairs: the dear creature's fainting. Poor victim! carry him up; he's as light as a feather!"

"If he stand this, Sir, I'm d——!" roared Joseph.

"Order Mr. Jos's elephant, Sambo!" cried the father. "Send to Exeter 'Change, Sambo;" but seeing Jos ready almost to cry with vexation, the old joker stopped his laughter, and said, holding out his hand to his son, "It's all fair on the Stock-Exchange, Jos,—and, Sambo, never mind the elephant, but give me and Mr. Jos a glass of Champagne. Boney himself hasn't got such in his cellar, my boy!"

A goblet of Champagne restored Joseph's equanimity, and before the bottle was emptied, of which as an invalid he took two-thirds, he had agreed to take the young ladies to Vauxhall.

"The girls must have a gentleman apiece," said the old gentleman. "Jos will be sure to leave Emmy in the crowd, he will be so taken up with Miss Sharp here. Send to 26, and ask George Osborne if he'll come."

At this, I don't know in the least for what reason, Mrs. Sedley looked at her husband and laughed. Mr. Sedley's eyes twinkled in a manner indescribably roguish; and he looked at Amelia, and Amelia hanging down her head, blushed as only young ladies of seventeen know how to blush, and as Miss Rebecca Sharp never blushed in her life—at least not

since she was eight years old, and when she was caught stealing jam out of a cupboard by her godmother. "Amelia had better write a note," said her father; "and let George Osborne see what a beautiful hand-writing we have brought back from Miss Pinkerton's. Do you remember when you wrote to him to come on Twelfth-night, Emmy, and spelt twelfth without the f?"

"That was years ago," said Amelia.

"It seems like yesterday, don't it, John?" said Mrs. Sedley to her husband; and that night in a conversation which took place in a front room in the second-floor, in a sort of tent, hung round with chintz of a rich and fantastic India pattern, and *doublé* with calico of a tender rose-colour; in the interior of which species of marquee was a feather-bed, on which were two pillows, on which were two round red faces, one in a laced nightcap, and one in a simple cotton one, ending in a tassel:—in *a curtain lecture,* I say, Mrs. Sedley took her husband to task for his cruel conduct to poor Joe.

"It was quite wicked of you, Mr. Sedley," said she, "to torment the poor boy so."

"My dear," said the cotton-tassel in defence of his conduct, "Jos is a great deal vainer than you ever were in your life, and that 's saying a good deal. Though, some thirty years ago, in the year seventeen hundred and eighty—what was it?—perhaps you had a right to be vain.—I don't say no. But I 've no patience with Jos and his dandified modesty. It is out-Josephing Joseph, my dear, and all the while the boy is only thinking of himself, and what a fine fellow he is. I doubt, Ma'am, we shall have some trouble with him yet. Here is Emmy's little friend making love to him as hard as she can; that 's quite clear; and if she does not catch him some other will. That man is destined to be a prey to woman, as I am to go on 'Change every day. It 's a mercy he did not bring us over a black daughter-in-law, my dear. But, mark my words, the first woman who fishes for him, hooks him."

"She shall go off to-morrow, the little artful creature," said Mrs. Sedley, with great energy.

"Why not she as well as another, Mrs. Sedley? The girl 's a white face at any rate. *I* don't care who marries him. Let Joe please himself."

And presently the voices of the two speakers were hushed, or were replaced by the gentle but unromantic music of the nose; and save when the church bells tolled the hour and the watchman called it, all was silent at the house of John Sedley, Esquire, of Russell Square, and the Stock Exchange.

When morning came, the good-natured Mrs. Sedley no longer thought of executing her threats with regard to Miss Sharp; for though nothing is more keen, nor more common, nor more justifiable, than maternal jealousy, yet she could not bring herself to suppose that the little, humble, grateful, gentle governess, would dare to look up to such a magnificent personage as the Collector of Boggley Wollah. The petition, too, for an extension of the young lady's leave of absence had already been despatched, and it would be difficult to find a pretext for abruptly dismissing her.

And as if all things conspired in favour of the gentle Rebecca, the very elements (although she was not inclined at first to acknowledge their action in her behalf) interposed to aid her. For on the evening appointed for the Vauxhall party, George Osborne having come to dinner, and the elders of the house having departed, according to invitation, to dine with Alderman Balls, at Highbury Barn, there came on such a thunder-storm as only happens on Vauxhall nights, and as obliged the young people, perforce, to remain at home. Mr. Osborne did not seem in the least disappointed at this occurrence. He and Joseph Sedley drank a fitting quantity of port-wine, *tête-à-tête*, in the dining-room, during the drinking of which Sedley told a number of his best Indian stories; for he was extremely talkative in man's society, and afterwards Miss Amelia Sedley did the honours of the drawing-room; and these four young persons passed such a comfortable evening together, that they declared they were rather glad of the thunder-storm than otherwise, which had caused them to put off their visit to Vauxhall.

Osborne was Sedley's godson, and had been one of the family any time these three-and-twenty years. At six weeks old, he had received from John Sedley a present of a silver cup; at six months old, a coral with gold whistle and bells; from his youth, upwards, he was "tipped" regularly by the old gentleman at Christmas; and on going back to school, remembered perfectly well being thrashed by Joseph Sedley, when the latter was a big, swaggering, hobbadyhoy, and George an impudent urchin of ten years old. In a word, George was as familiar with the family as such daily acts of kindness and intercourse could make him.

"Do you remember, Sedley, what a fury you were in, when I cut off the tassels of your Hessian boots, and how Miss—hem!—how Amelia rescued me from a beating, by falling down on her knees and crying out to her brother Jos, not to beat little George?"

Jos remembered this remarkable circumstance perfectly well, but vowed that he had totally forgotten it.

"Well, do you remember coming down in a gig to Dr. Swishtail's, to see me, before you went to India, and giving me half a guinea and a pat on the head? I always had an idea that you were at least seven feet high, and was quite astonished at your return from India to find you no taller than myself."

"How good of Mr. Sedley to go to your school and give you the money!" exclaimed Rebecca, in accents of extreme delight.

"Yes, and after I had cut the tassels of his boots too. Boys never forget those tips at school, nor the givers."

"I delight in Hessian boots," said Rebecca. Jos Sedley, who admired his own legs prodigiously, and always wore this ornamental *chaussure*, was extremely pleased at this remark, though he drew his legs under his chair as it was made.

"Miss Sharp!" said George Osborne, "you who are so clever an artist, you must make a grand historical picture of the scene of the boots. Sedley shall be represented in buckskins, and holding one of the injured boots in one hand; by the other he shall have hold of my shirt-frill. Amelia shall be kneeling near him, with her little hands up; and the picture shall have

a grand allegorical title, as the frontispieces have in the Medulla and the spelling-book."

"I shan't have time to do it here," said Rebecca. "I 'll do it when—when I am gone." And she dropped her voice, and looked so sad and piteous, that everybody felt how cruel her lot was, and how sorry they would be to part with her.

"O that you could stay longer, dear Rebecca," said Amelia.

"Why?" answered the other, still more sadly. "That I may be only the more unhap—unwilling to lose you?" And she turned away her head. Amelia began to give way to that natural infirmity of tears which, we have said, was one of the defects of this silly little thing. George Osborne looked at the two young women with a touched curiosity; and Joseph Sedley heaved something very like a sigh out of his big chest, as he cast his eyes down towards his favourite Hessian boots.

"Let us have some music, Miss Sedley—Amelia," said George, who felt at that moment an extraordinary, almost irresistible impulse to seize the above-mentioned young woman in his arms, and to kiss her in the face of the company; and she looked at him for a moment, and if I should say that they fell in love with each other at that single instant of time, I should perhaps be telling an untruth, for the fact is, that these two young people had been bred up by their parents for this very purpose, and their banns had, as it were, been read in their respective families any time these ten years. They went off to the piano, which was situated, as pianos usually are, in the back drawing-room; and as it was rather dark, Miss Amelia, in the most unaffected way in the world, put her hand into Mr. Osborne's, who, of course, could see the way among the chairs and ottomans a great deal better than she could. But this arrangement left Mr. Joseph Sedley *tête-à-tête* with Rebecca, at the drawing-room table, where the latter was occupied in netting a green silk purse.

"There is no need to ask family secrets," said Miss Sharp. "Those two have told theirs."

"As soon as he gets his company," said Joseph, "I believe the affair is settled. George Osborne is as good a fellow as ever breathed."

"And your sister the dearest creature in the world," said Rebecca. "Happy the man who wins her!" With this, Miss Sharp gave a great sigh.

When two unmarried persons get together, and talk upon such delicate subjects as the present, a great deal of confidence and intimacy is presently established between them. There is no need of giving a special report of the conversation which now took place between Mr. Sedley and the young lady; for the conversation, as may be judged from the foregoing specimen, was not especially witty or eloquent; it seldom is in private societies, or anywhere except in very high-flown and ingenious novels. As there was music in the next room, the talk was carried on, of course, in a low and becoming tone, though, for the matter of that, the couple in the next apartment would not have been disturbed had the talking been ever so loud, so occupied were they with their own pursuits.

Almost for the first time in his life, Mr. Sedley found himself talking, without the least timidity or hesitation, to a person of the other sex. Miss

Rebecca asked him a great number of questions about India, which gave him an opportunity of narrating many interesting anecdotes about that country and himself. He described the balls at Government House, and the manner in which they kept themselves cool in the hot weather, with punkahs, tatties, and other contrivances; and he was very witty regarding the number of Scotchmen whom Lord Minto, the Governor-General, patronised; and then he described a tiger hunt; and the manner in which the mahout of his elephant had been pulled off his howdah by one of the infuriated animals. How delighted Miss Rebecca was at the Government balls, and how she laughed at the stories of the Scotch *aides-de-camp*, and called Mr. Sedley a sad wicked satirical creature; and how frightened she was at the story of the elephant! "For your mother's sake, dear Mr. Sedley," she said, "for the sake of all your friends, promise *never* to go on one of those horrid expeditions."

"Pooh, pooh, Miss Sharp," said he, pulling up his shirt-collars; "the danger makes the sport only the pleasanter." He had never been but once at a tiger-hunt, when the accident in question occurred, and when he was half killed—not by the tiger, but by the fright. And as he talked on, he grew quite bold, and actually had the audacity to ask Miss Rebecca for whom she was knitting the green silk purse? He was quite surprised and delighted at his own graceful familiar manner.

"For any one who wants a purse," replied Miss Rebecca, looking at him in the most gentle winning way. Sedley was going to make one of the most eloquent speeches possible, and had begun, "O Miss Sharp, how——" when some song which was performed in the other room came to an end, and caused him to hear his own voice so distinctly that he stopped, blushed, and blew his nose in great agitation.

"Did you ever hear anything like your brother's eloquence?" whispered Mr. Osborne to Amelia. "Why, your friend has worked miracles."

"The more the better," said Miss Amelia; who, like almost all women who are worth a pin, was a match-maker in her heart, and would have been delighted that Joseph should carry back a wife to India. She had, too, in the course of this few days' constant intercourse, warmed into a most tender friendship for Rebecca, and discovered a million of virtues and amiable qualities in her which she had not perceived when they were at Chiswick together. For the affection of young ladies is of as rapid growth as Jack's bean-stalk, and reaches up to the sky in a night. It is no blame to them that after marriage this *Sehnsucht nach der Liebe* subsides. It is what sentimentalists, who deal in *very* big words, call a yearning after the Ideal, and simply means that women are commonly not satisfied until they have husbands and children on whom they may centre affections, which are spent elsewhere, as it were, in small change.

Having expended her little store of songs, or having stayed long enough in the back drawing-room, it now appeared proper to Miss Amelia to ask her friend to sing. "You would not have listened to me," she said to Mr. Osborne, (though she knew she was telling a fib,) "had you heard Rebecca first."

"I give Miss Sharp warning, though," said Osborne, "that, right or wrong, I consider Miss Amelia Sedley the first singer in the world."

"You shall hear," said Amelia; and Joseph Sedley was actually polite enough to carry the candles to the piano. Osborne hinted that he should like quite as well to sit in the dark; but Miss Sedley, laughing, declined to bear him company any farther, and the two accordingly followed Mr. Joseph. Rebecca sang far better than her friend, (though of course Osborne was free to keep his opinion,) and exerted herself to the utmost, and, indeed, to the wonder of Amelia, who had never known her perform so well. She sang a French song, which Joseph did not understand in the least, and which George confessed he did not understand, and then a number of those simple ballads which were the fashion forty years ago, and in which British tars, our King, poor Susan, blue-eyed Mary, and the like, were the principal themes. They are not, it is said, very brilliant, in a musical point of view, but contain numberless good-natured, simple appeals to the affections, which people understood better than the milk-and-water *lagrime, sospiri,* and *felicità* of the eternal Donizettian music with which we are favoured now-a-days.

Conversation of a sentimental sort, befitting the subject, was carried on between the songs, to which Sambo, after he had brought the tea, the

delighted cook, and even Mrs. Blenkinsop, the housekeeper, condescended to listen on the landing-place.

Among these ditties was one, the last of the concert, and to the following effect :—

Ah! bleak and barren was the moor,
Ah! loud and piercing was the storm,
The cottage hearth was shelter'd sure,
The cottage hearth was bright and warm—
An orphan boy the lattice pass'd,
And, as he mark'd its cheerful glow,
Felt doubly keen the midnight blast,
And doubly cold the fallen snow.

They mark'd him as he onward prest,
With fainting heart and weary limb ;
Kind voices bade him turn and rest,
And gentle faces welcomed him.
The dawn is up—the guest is gone,
The cottage hearth is blazing still ;
Heaven pity all poor wanderers lone !
Hark to the wind upon the hill !

It was the sentiment of the before-mentioned words, "When I'm gone," over again. As she came to the last words, Miss Sharp's "deep-toned voice faltered." Everybody felt the allusion to her departure, and to her hapless orphan state. Joseph Sedley, who was fond of music, and soft-hearted, was in a state of ravishment during the performance of the song, and profoundly touched at its conclusion. If he had had the courage ; if George and Miss Sedley had remained according to the former's proposal, in the farther room, Joseph Sedley's bachelorhood would have been at an end, and this work would never have been written. But at the close of the ditty, Rebecca quitted the piano, and giving her hand to Amelia, walked away into the front drawing-room twilight ; and, at this moment, Mr. Sambo made his appearance with a tray, containing sandwiches, jellies, and some glittering glasses and decanters, on which Joseph Sedley's attention was immediately fixed. When the parents of the house of Sedley returned from their dinner-party, they found the young people so busy in talking, that they had not heard the arrival of the carriage, and Mr. Joseph was in the act of saying, "My dear Miss Sharp, one little teaspoonful of jelly to recruit you after your immense—your—your *delightful* exertions."

"Bravo, Jos!" said Mr. Sedley ; on hearing the bantering of which well-known voice, Jos instantly relapsed into an alarmed silence, and quickly took his departure. He did not lie awake all night thinking whether or not he was in love with Miss Sharp ; the passion of love never interfered with the appetite or the slumber of Mr. Joseph Sedley ; but he thought to himself how delightful it would be to hear such songs as those after Cutcherry—what a *distinguée* girl she was—how she could speak French better than the Governor-General's lady herself—and what a sensation she would make at the Calcutta balls. "It's evident the poor devil's in love with me," thought he. "She is just as rich as most of the girls who come out to India. I might go farther, and fare worse, egad!" And in these meditations he fell asleep.

How Miss Sharp lay awake, thinking, will he come or not to-morrow ?

need not be told here. To-morrow came, and, as sure as fate, Mr. Joseph Sedley made his appearance before luncheon. He had never been known before to confer such an honour on Russell Square. George Osborne was somehow there already (sadly "putting out" Amelia, who was writing to her twelve dearest friends at Chiswick Mall), and Rebecca was employed upon her yesterday's work. As Joe's buggy drove up, and while, after his usual thundering knock and pompous bustle at the door, the Collector of Boggley Wollah laboured up stairs to the drawing-room, knowing glances were telegraphed between Osborne and Miss Sedley, and the pair, smiling archly, looked at Rebecca, who actually blushed as she bent her fair ringlets over her netting. How her heart beat as Joseph appeared,—Joseph, puffing from the staircase in shining creaking boots,—Joseph, in a new waistcoat, red with heat and nervousness, and blushing behind his wadded neckcloth. It was a nervous moment for all; and as for Amelia, I think she was more frightened than even the people most concerned.

Sambo, who flung open the door and announced Mr. Joseph, followed grinning, in the Collector's rear, and bearing two handsome nosegays of flowers, which the monster had actually had the gallantry to purchase in Covent Garden Market that morning—they were not as big as the hay-stacks which ladies carry about with them now-a-days, in cones of filagree paper; but the young women were delighted with the gift, as Joseph presented one to each, with an exceedingly solemn and clumsy bow.

"Bravo, Jos!" cried Osborne.

"Thank you, dear Joseph," said Amelia, quite ready to kiss her brother, if he were so minded. (And I think for a kiss from such a dear creature as Amelia, I would purchase all Mr. Lee's conservatories out of hand.)

"O heavenly, heavenly flowers!" exclaimed Miss Sharp, and smelt them delicately, and held them to her bosom, and cast up her eyes to the ceiling, in an ecstasy of admiration. Perhaps she just looked first into the bouquet, to see whether there was a *billet-doux* hidden among the flowers; but there was no letter.

"Do they talk the language of flowers at Boggley Wollah, Sedley?" asked Osborne, laughing.

"Language of fiddlestick!" replied the sentimental youth. "Bought 'em at Nathan's; very glad you like 'em; and eh, Amelia, my dear, I bought a pine-apple at the same time, which I gave to Sambo. Let's have it for tiffin; very cool and nice this hot weather." Rebecca said she had never tasted a pine, and longed beyond everything to taste one.

So the conversation went on. I don't know on what pretext Osborne left the room, or why, presently, Amelia went away, perhaps to superintend the slicing of the pine-apple; but Jos was left alone with Rebecca, who had resumed her work, and the green silk and the shining needles were quivering rapidly under her white slender fingers.

"What a beautiful, *byoo-ootiful* song that was you sang last night, dear Miss Sharp," said the Collector. "It made me cry almost; 'pon my honour it did."

"Because you have a kind heart, Mr. Joseph: all the Sedleys have, I think."

"It kept me awake last night, and I was trying to hum it this morning, in bed; I was, upon my honour. Gollop, my doctor, came in at eleven (for I'm a sad invalid, you know, and see Gollop every day), and, 'gad! there I was, singing away like—a robin."

"O you droll creature! Do let me hear you sing it."

"Me? No, you, Miss Sharp; my dear Miss Sharp, do sing it."

"Not now, Mr. Sedley," said Rebecca, with a sigh. "My spirits are not equal to it: besides, I must finish the purse. Will you help me, Mr. Sedley?" And before he had time to ask how, Mr. Joseph Sedley, of the East India Company's service, was actually seated *tête-à-tête* with a young lady, looking at her with a most killing expression; his arms stretched out before her in an imploring attitude, and his hands bound in a web of green silk, which she was unwinding.

* * * * * *

In this romantic position Osborne and Amelia found the interesting pair, when they entered to announce that tiffin was ready. The skein of silk was just wound round the card; but Mr. Jos had never spoken.

"I am sure he will to-night, dear," Amelia said, as she pressed Rebecca's hand; and Sedley, too, had communed with his soul, and said to himself, "'Gad, I'll pop the question at Vauxhall."

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